

# LIA GRIFFITH

## LIAGRIFFITH.COM

Handcrafted lifestyle is what Lia Griffith knows best. With a background in graphic design, Lia is a daily DIYer, photographer, stylist, paper craft designer and big dreamer. She launched her handcrafted lifestyle blog, LiaGriffith.com, in the Spring of 2013, offering daily projects, printables, and inspiration. Currently her designs and tutorials are featured in 16 publications, including Mollie Makes, Made in Paper, ReLoved, and Creative Spaces. Here she shares her experience of growing her creative business.

My parents were both incredible artists, so my three sisters and I grew up in a household of creativity. Dad built our home, and Mom made our clothes. She taught us how to sew, we canned everything, and recycled old furniture; from top to bottom we handcrafted everything. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but when my mom died last year I sat down and wrote a post about her. That's when I really realized how much she was my teacher in handcrafting my life. As a child I had hated it, but over the years I grew to love the DIY aesthetic and now it is absolutely part of everything I do. →





My journey to this point has been a long and choppy one. Although my trade has always been graphic design, I never felt like it filled my soul. It paid the bills, I learned a lot, but there was always something missing. So I explored other avenues. I dabbled in retail, opened a children's clothing boutique followed by a flower store, and although both were fun and I had some success along the way, there was still a part of me that wasn't satisfied with my creative output. I always seemed to want more.

They say everything happens for a reason. But in March of 2013 when I was laid off from my job as a wedding stationery designer at [elli.com](http://elli.com), I found it hard to see the good. I had had great success with their blog and was devastated to lose something I had worked so hard for.

Although I felt like my world had crumbled around me, I also knew that if I could find the necessary strength and self-belief, this was the perfect opportunity to go and get what I wanted: to start my own creative business. I negotiated a package that gave me the rights to all my content from the [elli.com](http://elli.com) blog and allowed me to announce to our readers that I was starting out on my own. By negotiating these two points, I gave myself a fantastic springboard from which to launch [LiaGriffith.com](http://LiaGriffith.com). →



### MY FAVORITE QUOTE

"Things don't need to be expensive, they just need to be creative".

— Jonathan Adler



Growth was really important to me. I had lost my job and needed this new venture to provide me with an income, so I set myself some very strict goals. In April 2013, a month after being laid off, I launched my blog with the intention of writing five posts per week for eight months. By December 2013 I had to have written 200 posts and reached at least 500,000 page views per month. I had brought around 2,000 readers with me from elli.com so I knew I was asking a lot, but failure wasn't an option.

I made a few hundred dollars a month through advertising on my site via Martha's Circle and wrote some paid posts for DIY Network. It paid little and I didn't feel it helped to grow my "brand," but these posts were necessary to allow me to go after my dream.

During those months I was consumed by my goal. Nothing else mattered. I designed, I made, I photographed, I wrote, I posted. Small business development experts would advise you to ensure you have a great online presence, and to make sure you're mixing in the online community, reading and commenting on others' posts, sharing tutorials, retweeting great finds. Not me — I didn't have time. For me it was just about getting those posts up and out. My only rules were consistency and quality. Money was tight but I felt richer than ever. I finally felt like everything I'd ever done had come to this. Like I had come home.

A few months in I was lucky enough to get a call from an old friend who'd seen what I was doing and was interested in supporting my work. I accepted a small investment from him to get me through that first year, but really I hurt for nothing. If anything, those early days just made me more creative. If I needed something, I made it! →



By December 2013 I was getting well over 550,000 page views per month. It was overwhelming, but I had more than reached my goal. I attribute a large part of the success in those first months to rigorously following those two golden rules: consistency and quality. I never compromised on either. By posting high quality content of a on a daily basis, I ensured that my work was regularly shared. Pinterest became a huge referrer with crafters regularly pinning and repinning my images. I quickly realized the importance of a good photograph. If you can hone your photography skills and remain diligent about the quality of your work, then the community will always want to share. The handmade community is great in that way. We're an incredibly supportive bunch. →

As my blog grew I began to get offers of partnerships that I just couldn't turn down, yet I knew I couldn't commit to on my own. By January 2014 I was struggling to keep up with the demands of what was quickly becoming a fully fledged business. Although I have some business knowledge from my previous jobs — it's not what fills my soul, I need to be free — so I just knew I couldn't continue alone. In a state of utter desperation I turned to my business partner for help and advice. It's with his help that I've been able to hire a graphic designer and business manager. I now have some design support as well as someone on board who is really good at business. My old making space is now home to three extra desks and computers — making now takes place in any other corner of the house that seems to be free!

Now that I'm a little more established, I only agree to cross-promotions that are a good fit for the Lia Griffith brand. Just recently I received a brief to write a post featuring products from a well-known homewares store. It pays well and I get to revamp a room in my home for the piece. My images will appear on their site, so it's a great partnership for me. I also have licensing deals with a couple of companies who use my designs and I then earn royalties from each sale. I'm still not making mega-bucks, but these partnerships allow me to pay my staff fairly and enjoy the little comforts I like in life.

I never expected such rapid growth in my business. I am actually a firm believer in slow growth. But, from that small yet invaluable springboard, my blog took on a life of its own. By striving to consistently create great content, working relentlessly hard, and never compromising on quality, I am on track to hit my next goal of 1 million page views per month by December 2014. My motto, which is written on the wall of our office, reads: "Inspire, teach, reignite creativity." That is what I'm here to do now. That is what fills my soul. ■

Where Women Create BUSINESS would like to thank Lia Griffith for her involvement in our winter issue. To learn more, visit [LiaGriffith.com](http://LiaGriffith.com).



## HOW TO CREATE A GREAT BRAND

Building and growing your own creative business begins with knowing exactly who you are. The Lia Griffith aesthetic strives to be easily identifiable and was built using these five simple steps.

1. Ask yourself these questions and be as thorough as possible: What is my vision, my mission, the reason I do what I do? (My vision is to have a multi-layered handcrafted lifestyle media company that reaches across the world. My mission is to inspire people to be creative in their everyday life. The reason I do what I do is that I have a resource of creative ideas to share with people that can both be useful to others and inspire their own version.)
2. With that information in mind, fill in the blanks to give you a well-rounded idea of your brand identity: I am a (handcrafted lifestyle designer), who (shares, blogs, inspires and teaches) for (women of all ages), so they can (reconnect with their creative souls).
3. From all of your notes, write a short vision statement that you can carry with you through all that you do. (Inspire, Teach & Reignite Creativity)
4. Because my brand is my name, I add a short tagline that makes a quick statement of my forte (Handcraft Your Life). Think about tagging a simple sentence onto your brand name to help people get a quick, clear picture of what it is that you do.
5. Make sure anything and everything that has your name on it is in line with your vision statement and tagline.